Late surge topples Rabun; Lady Panthers tied for first in 8-AA

Boys - The Union County Panthers overcame a deficit to defeat Rabun County 61-59 on Tuesday night at Rabun County High School.

The Panthers managed just 18 points in the first half, but scored 43 points in the second half to pick up the win. Rabun County led 27-25 at halftime.

Union played without four starters from the bench due to fouls. "We had to play smaller and we played with more determination," Union Head Coach David Tucker said.

In the second half, Union used a 19-3 run in the first quarter to gain the lead. The Panthers scored the last 10 points of the period to take a 46-36 score at the break, and then 64-47 lead by the end of the third quarter.

The Panthers reached the Final Four of the Region Tournament for the fifth time under Tucker's guidance.

Union Head Coach David Tucker and Assistant Coach Tina Dockrey discuss their stall offense with point guard Brooke Maddox during practice.

Girls - The Lady Panthers lost to Greene County 60-58, but clinched the third seed in the Region 8-AA Tournament/

Greene County's Austin DiNofrio was too much for the Lady Panthers — which will be Union's likely opening round State Tournament opponent — as the Lady Wildcats went on to win 60-58.

The Lady Panthers were able to hold off the home team until day three of the tourney, won't be able to face off again game. (Union and Rabun 12-2, 7-1). entered the contest needing a win to knock the Lady Wildcats out of contention for the No. 1 seed in Region 8-AA.

"We're looking forward to playing Union. We have to hold down with Greene County," Rabun County Coach Jim Massey said.

The Lady Panthers head coach Chicago Day also said the Lady Wildcats are a tough, experienced opponent.

Greene went in the Region Tournament and hosted the first round of State - something that hasn't been accomplished since 2009, which is the last time Rabun County advanced to the Class A-AA State Tournament.

Meanwhile, the 2010-11 Lady Panthers have one game left on their regular season schedule and the Social Circle Lady Redskins will visit Blairsville for Senior Night. Last month, Union went to Social Circle (17-10, 9-7) for the season finale, losing 49-45, and are looking for a home win against Social Circle.

The Lady Panthers reach the Final Four for the third time under Tucker's leadership.

"It's always in the back of your mind," Tucker said, "but this is the third time, and it's always in the back of your mind in the last 15 years. This is the first time Union advanced past the opening round of State."

The Region Tournament was also the last time the Lady Panthers defeated Rabun County on the road. Until Union wins to hang onto the No. 1 seed in the region, Tucker said Union will use the win to clinch the region crown and secure a berth in the state tournament.

"We needed to win tonight," Tucker said. "We needed to close the gap in the third - clawing their way back to a 46-36 score."

Union takes care of business at Washington-Wilkes, clinch fifth consecutive trip to State

Union defeated Washington-Wilkes 60-58 Tuesday night to clinch the third seed in the Region 8-AA Tournament and fourth consecutive trip to the state playoffs.

The Lady Panthers, who are 12-2, 7-1 overall in Region 8-AA, clinched the third seed in next week's regionals.

The 2009 Region Tournament was also the last time the Lady Panthers defeated Rabun County on the road. Tucker said Union will use the win to clinch the region crown and secure a berth in the state tournament.

"We needed to win tonight," Tucker said. "We needed to close the gap in the third - clawing their way back to a 46-36 score."

Union Head Coach Dave Tucker and Assistant Coach Chuck Bell discuss their stall offense with point guard Brooke Maddox during practice.

The Region Tournament will still continue for Rabun County, which is 9-5 in the region and fourth.

With the win, Union clinched the third seed and will host a state playoff game in the first round. Union will face a second state playoff game in the second round.

The Lady Panthers went 11-for-2 at the line in the third frame. As a result, Rabun County did not have a chance to put the game out of reach.

A Rabun trey at the 2:58 mark of the third opened a 45-36 lead, but Union's Brooke Maddox picked up a foul to add four to the Lady Panthers' six-point lead.

"We made some big baskets late in the game," Tucker said. "We made some big baskets late in the game, and I think that's what put us in position to get through.

The second quarter was Union's time to shine as Rabun County got into foul trouble and Union was able to step on the gas to gain a 26-23 lead at the end of the first.

In the first quarter, Rabun County led 27-25. The Lady Panthers then managed to extend their lead to 36-34 in the second quarter.

Union Head Coach David Tucker and Assistant Coach Chuck Bell discuss their stall offense with point guard Brooke Maddox during practice.

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The Panthers closed the gap to 40-39 and Rabun County faced a deficit of nine as a result. Tucker said Union's defense was the key to the win.

Union improved to 16-2 after the win and Rabun County is 9-10 in the region.

The Panthers are in second place in the region standings at 16-2 and Rabun County, with 9-10 in the region, is in third place. The Lady Panthers are in a 19-3 first quarter.

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The Lady Panthers went off the board in the last minute of the game, and Rabun County led 36-34 in the second quarter.

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